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Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the sixty-fourth session

Observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly

Letter dated 14 July 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion of the item entitled "Observer status for the International Olympic Committee in the General Assembly" in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum on the nature and description of the International Olympic Committee (annex I) and the relevant draft resolution (annex II) are also attached.

I have the honour to further request that this letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Giulio **Terzi**
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Historical background

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894 for the purpose of placing sport at the service of humankind, promoting a peaceful society, and safeguarding human dignity. It espouses a philosophy of human development and healthy lifestyles by blending sport with culture and education. Its Founding Fathers were inspired by the Olympic Games of Greek antiquity, during which city states engaged in athletic competition in conditions of peace.

The Olympic Movement is an association of 205 National Olympic Committees; the International Federations that govern individual sports, such as FIFA and the International Association of Athletics Federations; the countries organizing the Olympic Games; the five Olympic continental associations; and millions of sportspersons around the world.

2. Symbols and motto

The symbol of IOC is the five interlaced rings in the primary colours found in all the flags of the United Nations Member States, representing the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games; the motto is "Citius-Altius-Fortius" (Faster Higher Stronger) expressing the aspirations of the Olympic Movement; and IOC also officially adopted the Olympic Anthem.

3. The Olympic Games

The International Olympic Committee organizes the Games of the Olympiad (Olympic Summer Games) and the Olympic Winter Games. Starting in 2010, IOC will introduce the Youth Olympic Games for summer and winter sports, whose main purpose is to prevent young people from falling into a sedentary lifestyle by encouraging them to participate in physical activity.

4. Membership

The International Olympic Committee consists of a maximum of 115 members that hold a general session at least once a year. They elect the IOC President by secret ballot for an initial eight-year term. The President presides over all IOC activities and acts as its permanent representative. Since 16 July 2001, Jacques Rogge of Belgium has been the President.

5. Organizational structure

Universality is at the heart of the IOC membership structure. All IOC members are volunteers and they bring their unique expertise to the management of IOC, spanning sectors as diverse as sport, economics, science, media, politics and geographical distribution. Most of the members have participated in the Games as athletes or been active athletes or sports officials.

The Executive Board meets quarterly to manage the affairs of IOC. It consists of the IOC President, four Vice-Presidents and 10 other members, including an athlete representative, elected for a four-year term by the session by secret ballot.

The President establishes IOC commissions that study specialized subjects and make recommendations to the Executive Board. Commission members include IOC members, representatives of the International Sports Federations, National Olympic Committees, athletes, technical experts, advisers, sports specialists and individuals of high standing in society or their professions.

The IOC sessions, Executive Board and commissions define the strategic decisions that are implemented by the IOC administration.

The IOC administration is placed under the responsibility of a Director General, who runs general affairs under the authority and guidance of the President. He is assisted in this task by departmental directors. The IOC administration is currently made up of about 450 staff of 38 nationalities. It has been headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, since 1915.

6. Association with the United Nations

Since 1993, every two years the United Nations General Assembly has deliberated and adopted a resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal," thus supporting IOC and Olympic Movement in its endeavours to contribute to the United Nations mission to promote mutual understanding, solidarity, and peaceful dialogue among communities. The resolutions are an acknowledgement of the critical role of sports in society. The resolutions are:

Resolution 48/11 in October 1993
Resolution 50/13 in November 1995
Resolution 52/21 in November 1997
Resolution 54/34 in November 1999
Resolution 56/75 in December 2001
Resolution 58/6 in November 2003
Resolution 60/8 in December 2005
Resolution 62/4 in October 2007

The General Assembly has also adopted a number of resolutions entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, peace and development," namely:

Resolution 58/5 in November 2003
Resolution 59/10 in October 2004
Resolution 61/10 in November 2006
Resolution 62/271 in July 2008

In its resolutions the Assembly has called upon Member States to cooperate with IOC and all concerned agencies and programmes of the United Nations to implement projects using sport as a tool for peacebuilding and human development, and have supported IOC and the Olympic Movement in their work to generate mutual understanding, solidarity, and peaceful dialogue among communities through the symbolic but powerful call for an observance of the Olympic Truce during each edition of the Olympic Games.

Recognition of the added value of sport to achieve the objectives of the United Nations was further acknowledged with the proclamation by the General Assembly that 1995 be celebrated as the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Idea and 2005 as the International Year of Sport for Development and Peace.

7. Activities with United Nations peacekeeping missions

In May 2006, the Secretary-General formalized the working relationship that had already developed between IOC and some United Nations peacekeeping missions on the ground. He requested United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world to seriously consider applying sport to their work as they tried to rebuild confidence between parties emerging from a conflict.

The International Olympic Committee has successfully worked in Liberia with UNMIL, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with MONUC, and in Haiti with MINUSTAH through the country's sports community. IOC is developing programmes in Côte d'Ivoire with ONUCI and the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace to the Secretary-General. These programmes are meant to encourage communities, particularly young people, to interact, build confidence, and develop a spirit of cooperation and friendship.

The flag of the United Nations also flies at the Olympic Games.

8. Relations with United Nations agencies

The International Olympic Committee has signed memorandums of understanding with 15 specialized agencies and programmes, the oldest being the memorandum of understanding signed in 1922 between IOC and the International Labour Organization, and it cooperates with another 10 of them. The activities that IOC has undertaken in support of specialized agencies have been aimed particularly at human development, humanitarian relief and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Some examples are:

(a) **UNDP.** The two have teamed up to encourage Governments to place sport at the centre of development, mobilize communities for peace, and use sport to unite their peoples. IOC and UNDP organized a unique forum that brought together resident representatives, sports leaders and Governments to discuss the contribution of sport to development and nation-building.

(b) **ILO.** Poverty alleviation through local economic development activities and women's empowerment in sports have been the major focus of the IOC-ILO partnership over the years.

(c) **UNICEF.** Since 1996, IOC and UNICEF have striven to place their networks at the service of children and youth development, using basic physical and relational activities to address empowerment, health conditions and living standards. From HIV prevention to girls' education and leadership, joint initiatives have reached out to thousands of women and children, in particular from disadvantaged communities. In the framework of the Olympic Games, IOC has encouraged its partner organizations to provide resources to the agency and engage them in educating young people during the Games. The "Champions for Children's Rights" during the 2004 Athens Olympic Youth Camp was a particularly innovative collaboration.

(d) **UNAIDS.** IOC and UNAIDS have collaborated in a global educational programme that targets young people. The joint advocacy publication, which has a special appeal for young people, has been published in English, French, Mandarin, Russian, Portuguese and Swahili. Versions in other languages are planned for the future. IOC commits resources to its joint advocacy programmes, using sport as a vehicle to carry the message. At the Olympic Games and in between, high-profile sportspersons from across the globe lend their images, time and resources to participate in these programmes.

(e) **UNESCO.** The Olympic Movement works hand-in-hand with UNESCO in areas such as education, gender equality, culture and anti-doping education. The World Anti-Doping Agency was inspired by IOC to combat the scourge of doping in sport. The international anti-doping convention has been ratified by the necessary number of United Nations Member States at the behest of UNESCO.

(f) **UNEP.** The environment is a major element in the organization of the Olympic Games. UNEP is the partner of choice in environmental matters when IOC and Olympic Games host countries organize the Games. This partnership has now been extended to include a worldwide educational programme for young people using the unifying power of sport. The Secretary-General's report alludes to the just-ended confidence-building sports project in Kenya that was organized under the auspices of UNEP. IOC was a full partner in that project, mobilizing sports organizations to participate and providing resources.

(g) **WHO.** The health of sportspersons is paramount. IOC has always benefited from the advice of WHO on health issues and in designing and maintaining smoke-free Games. IOC and WHO work together to encourage the general public to participate in physical activity, and to organize the hugely successful Sport for All World Congress, which encourages the general public to adopt healthy lifestyles.

(h) **WFP.** IOC has started an alliance with WFP: it contributes financial resources to a programme to feed children and supports WFP projects in four countries in Africa and the Middle East. IOC has also supported the WFP worldwide "Walk the World: Fight Hunger" campaign by actively encouraging sportspersons to participate. In war-torn Somalia IOC has capitalized on its partnership with WFP by providing young people with sports equipment and other resources.

(i) **UNHCR.** In a long-standing cooperation programme, the Olympic Movement provides sporting and humanitarian assistance to the agency for refugees and displaced persons on three continents. The IOC "Giving is Winning" campaign has been a great success: in it, all sportspersons, National Olympic Committees and sports officials are requested to donate items of clothing. In 2004, the project collected eight 40-foot container-loads of clothing. In the lead-up to and during the Games in Beijing, the project collected 17 containers for donation to UNHCR. IOC has supported education and free-time programmes in refugee camps, providing material and financial resources. IOC is supporting the UNHCR project to use sport to address sexual and gender-based violence in refugee camps.

9. Activities with Governments and governmental organizations

The International Olympic Committee has worked with the European Union and the African Union to adequately position sport as an important socio-economic

activity and a contributor to the health, well-being and happiness of people. IOC supports talent identification and sports development programmes around the world, particularly making available financial resources for such developments to countries that need them most.

IOC, through the National Olympic Committees, works with Governments to send talented youngsters to school in their own countries; those with real potential are afforded opportunities to follow courses of their choice at appropriate universities while pursuing their sporting dreams.

10. Activities with other organizations

The International Olympic Committee works with some of the world's leading organizations in the service of society. It has collaborated with the Red Cross Movement in landmine clearance and in training people maimed by war and landmines. IOC has contributed to funds for victims of natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

11. Reasons for seeking observer status for the International Olympic Committee

(a) The International Olympic Committee is the world's largest youth-based sports organization. Sport influences young people in particular and the world's community in general. Sport has a great influence on the socio-economic lives of people. The Olympic Movement reaches every facet of society.

(b) The International Olympic Committee and its partner sports organizations have worked with the United Nations, Governments and the international community in using sport to transform the lives of millions of people, especially young citizens across the globe, delivering education and services to the vulnerable, supporting environmental campaigns and providing a vehicle for the United Nations peacekeeping missions.

(c) The cornerstone of IOC social responsibility is to provide the United Nations with the necessary support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. IOC has identified six of the Goals as areas through which sport could make a large impact, and has been active in providing support through national programmes of some Member States or through United Nations agencies. These are:

Goal No. 1: Eradicate extreme poverty. The IOC programme for sports development at the grass-roots level is linked to poverty eradication. It has dedicated resources to the construction of basic sports infrastructures in developing countries in order to nurture the skills of young people and women in economically marginalized areas. Many United Nations agencies and the private sector are partners in this project. IOC has also launched an infrastructure development pilot project for developing countries. These facilities use sport to attract young people and the community as a whole to educational programmes, community development projects, health care and dialogue.

Goal No. 2: Achieve universal primary education. IOC has supported school programmes at all levels, providing resources for children to attend and complete school. In partnership with various organizations, IOC has provided resources for children caught in conflict to be educated, and has provided material support through United Nations agencies for young people in refugee camps to gain primary

education. A back-to-school project involving Governments, National Olympic Committees and the private sector has enabled thousands of children to return to primary school in parts of Africa. IOC has also provided resources for the construction and repair of classrooms, and is currently working with a United Nations agency to create libraries in a number of countries through sports organizations.

Goal No. 3: Promote gender equality and promote women. IOC has a special commission that deals with this issue as a priority. Every four years, it organizes a special world forum that deals with the promotion of women in all areas of society through sport. IOC also provides resources for the promotion of gender equality, and these resources are not reserved only for the sports community. Special educational programmes have been designed by external experts and are offered to women to make them more competitive. IOC works with several United Nations agencies to this end. It uses the occasion of International Women's Day to celebrate the contribution of women worldwide to the development of society, especially in the promotion of women and girls, for which special prizes are awarded. Recent recipients have included a minister, a prime minister and a first lady.

Goal No. 4: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. IOC is so concerned by the spread of the pandemic that it has launched a special programme to educate young people, using sport to reach them. Working with United Nations agencies, Governments, governmental and no. -governmental organizations, and the Red Cross Movement, IOC has galvanized the participation of young people in this process in Africa, Asia and Oceania. It has used the powerful symbol of the Olympic Torch relay to increase young people's awareness of the pandemic. IOC has also encouraged United Nations agencies to use the Olympic Games educational publication, "Together for HIV and AIDS Prevention", which will soon become the largest Olympic-related publication in the organization's history.

Goal No. 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. IOC takes great pride in its environmental policies. It has a dedicated Sport and Environment Commission that works with United Nations agencies to ensure environmental sustainability during the Olympic Games and educate young people around the world about preserving the environment. The IOC environmental policy is linked directly to Olympic Games legacy programmes, in which host countries are required to show that their programmes are designed to last beyond the duration of the games. IOC grants resources to educational programmes for young people around the world. Such programmes are also linked to economic sustainability and therefore contribute immensely to improving quality of life. IOC also collaborates with Governments and specialist organizations.

Goal No. 8: Develop a global partnership for development. For their success the Olympic Movement's activities leveraging the popularity, discipline and immense organizational power and capacity of sport to serve society depend on the partnership it has developed primarily with the United Nations and United Nations agencies, Governments of the world, the vast sporting community and its organization around the globe, specialist organizations, and the public. This partnership continues to be developed and strengthened. IOC understands the influence of sport on young people, and it will continue to help its partners deliver educational and development programmes to those who need it, providing some of the resources itself.

12. Conclusion

At the World Summit in New York, Heads of State and Government of Member States formally recognized sport as an important tool for development and peace and included the following statement in their declaration:

> We underline that sports can foster peace and development and can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding, and we encourage discussion in the General Assembly for a proposal leading to a plan of action on sport and development.

The Secretary-General's follow-up report to the General Assembly entitled "Sport for development and peace: progress and prospects" (A/62/325 and Corr.1), outlining measures taken during the first years of the three-year Action Plan defined in his prior report, "Sport for development and peace: the way forward" (A/61/373). The report justifies amply the important role that sport plays in the development of society and in supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. His report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, "Sport for development and peace: building on the foundations" (A/63/466), mentions cooperation between IOC and United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies during the Olympic Games in Beijing.

It is the intention of IOC to maintain this momentum and support the United Nations in pursuing its mandate, as well as to intensify its communication and collaborative action with the United Nations.

Annex II

Draft resolution

The General Assembly,

Considering the unique status and long-standing dedication of the International Olympic Committee to placing sport at the service of humanity and promoting a peaceful global society,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee,

1. *Decides* to invite the International Olympic Committee to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.